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Chairman Schiff Opening Statement at Hearing on National Security Implications of Climate Change

*****LIVESTREAM: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCheD2L-zDY> *****

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), the Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, made an opening statement at the Committee’s open hearing – “National Security Implications of Climate Change.”

The statements, as prepared, are below:

“Today’s open hearing is the fourth in a series that the Committee is conducting to examine the intersection of key national security challenges and intelligence. In our prior hearings we have explored the rise of authoritarianism, Russian intelligence tradecraft, and China’s use of technology as a tool of repression.

“This morning we will look at climate change, which is the greatest long-term national security threat to the United States and which will affect every dimension of our national life for decades and possibly centuries.

“In the unclassified 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment, Director of National Intelligence Coats submitted this finding to our Senate counterparts on behalf of the Community:

‘Global environmental and ecological degradation, as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond. Climate hazards such as extreme weather, higher temperatures, droughts, floods, wildfires, storms, sea level rise, soil degradation, and acidifying oceans are intensifying, threatening infrastructure, health, and water and food security.’

“In the past, the IC has partnered with climate scientists themselves, to the mutual benefit of both. In the 1990s, the CIA managed a

publicly acknowledged environmental intelligence program called 'MEDEA,' which granted clearances to climate scientists so that they could take advantage of technical collection capabilities to inform their research.

"In public remarks about the initiative, former CIA Director Deutch said in 1996 that MEDEA gave these cleared scientists 'an ongoing record of changes in the earth that will improve their understanding of environmental processes. More importantly, it will greatly enhance their ability to provide strategic warning of potentially catastrophic threats to the health and welfare of our citizens.'

"MEDEA, which was halted under the George W. Bush administration and then restarted for a time under President Obama, exemplified the IC's commitment to ensuring that its assessments about the impacts of a changing climate are based on the most rigorous scientific observations and peer-reviewed data possible.

"The National Intelligence Council, as the DNI's lead for strategic analysis, has been at the forefront of publishing analytic findings about the national security implications of climate change projected across a long-term horizon -- and its findings demonstrate why we must take immediate, sweeping action to avert the direst climate crisis scenarios.

"In 2008, the NIC released a National Intelligence Assessment that judged climate change's effects as likely to exacerbate poverty, societal tensions, and shortcomings in governance, while potentially spurring domestic strife in some countries, or interstate conflict amid competition for natural resources.

"Eight years later in 2016, the NIC published a subsequent Community-coordinated memorandum devoted to climate change's manifold impacts on national security interests. Unsurprisingly, its topline findings hewed to those from 2008, further underscoring the inextricable linkages between more frequent and more intense extreme weather events and political or humanitarian upheavals.

"The Community has also warned that climate change will put additional stress the on the U.S. military, whether through increased deployments to address more frequent humanitarian crises in hard-hit parts of the world, or because extreme weather events physically threaten our bases or other capabilities.

"Meanwhile, thawing in the Arctic and anticipated new maritime access lanes could spur both China and Russia to project combinations of military power and economic influence in a region of emerging geostrategic significance. Newly reachable mineral resources or oil reserves, in tandem with easier accessibility for commercial or naval vessels, could create friction among Arctic claimants and undercut the efficacy of the multilateral Arctic Council to peaceably resolve disputes.

"And the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, regions of ongoing U.S. interest, are likely to suffer from extreme temperatures and scarcity of water and may face growing levels of instability, poverty, violence, hunger, and migration as desperate people seek a better

life. One sorrowful place where many of these conditions are apparent is war-ravaged Yemen, which has even reportedly witnessed competing actors on the ground weaponizing water shortages to gain an upper hand.

“There are other areas of concern too:

- Further radicalization of populations revolting against weak or failed governments that cannot address climate insecurities;
- Increased or new migration patterns as people flee climate dangers and disasters, straining other nations’ capacities to absorb them;
- The future inability or unwillingness of international organizations or multilateral groupings to muster the requisite responses to climate change’s cross-border or regional impacts;
- And the role and consequences of unregulated, emerging technologies, such as geoengineering techniques designed to manipulate weather, which could carry harmful spillover effects without properly established frameworks in place.

“Before turning to the Ranking Member and then to our witnesses for their statements, I want to close with a prescient sentiment expressed by President Theodore Roosevelt more than a century ago:

‘Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us...’

“With that, I recognize Ranking Member Nunes for his opening remarks.”

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